

The THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED FORTY US I S S N
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The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. Paul Williams, Elmhurst, IL, president; Mrs. Charles MacPherson, Acton, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, State University, Geneseo, NY 14454, secretary-treasurer. Annual membership \$3.00; life membership, \$100.00. Address communications to the secretary.

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SUMMER 1977

THOREAU ON THE BENEVOLENCE OF NATURE by Robert Francis

When a man falls passionately in love with a beautiful woman, he may believe -- so great is her beauty, so great is his passion -- that in addition to being beautiful she is a paragon of virtue: always kind, tender, and benevolent, ever faithful to him, ever exquisitely responsive to his love.

Henry Thoreau was passionately in love with nature. He found her, even as you and I do, infinitely fascinating and beautiful. He also found her predominantly kind, tender, benevolent, and exquisitely responsive to her human lovers. At least that is the conclusion I must draw after searching through his entire opus for any frank admission that nature is ever otherwise.

I should like to explore with you, briefly, this morning the probable reasons for his taking this extreme position. Most of us, I venture, would agree that although nature has infinite blessings for myriads of her human children (as well as for her children not human) and especially for those human children who, like Thoreau, love her passionately and are in tune with her subtle moods and harmonies---most of us at the same time would probably agree that others of her children she tortures on the rack. In river floods and tidal waves she drowns millions. Other millions she buries alive in hot lava and volcanic ash. She has her scorpions and venomous serpents, her pythons and boa constrictors, her bone-crunching crocodiles, her man-eating sharks. And in her chamber of horrors there is the Army Ant, one African branch being known as the Driver Ant. It moves in vast armies or congregations of perhaps 150,000 and is on the move most of the time. Any living meat in its path it will feast on, insects and small animals mostly; but no animal, including man, if wounded or trapped, is too large for it to swarm over and devour until only the white bones are left. As for nature's hostile bacteria and viruses, poised to invade the human organism, no catalogue could enumerate them all.

Furthermore nature has devised a scheme of living things in which every species is the prey of other species, and within each species is an inevitable competition for food, mates, and survival. Homo sapiens is no exception. Even as he preys on other living things, so they prey on him whenever they get a chance to. The weak and the unlucky are eliminated; the strong and the lucky survive. Result: the survivors are healthy and vigorous, and nature maintains her mystic balance. The system works, it works beautifully, but for those weak or unlucky individuals who are ruthlessly sacrificed, can nature he said to be kind, tender, and benevolent?

In his Journal of the Maine Woods Thoreau wrote: "Who shall describe the inexhaustible tenderness and immortal life of the grim forest, where Nature,

though it be midwinter, is ever in her spring, where the moss-grown and decaying trees are not old, but seem to enjoy perpetual youth; and blissful, innocent Nature, like a serene infant, is too happy to make a noise, except by a few tinkling, lisping birds and trickling rills?" Blissful, innocent Nature.

When his companion was lost overnight in the forest, however, nature's serenity seemed less to the point. And when his Indian guide killed and skinned a moose, Thoreau blanched at this most "natural" act. "What a tragical business it was,--to see that still warm and palpitating body pierced with a knife, to see the warm milk stream from the rent udder, and the ghastly naked red carcass appearing from within its seemly robe, which was made to hide it."

Thoreau sometimes took the opposite tack, admitted nature was indifferent and inhumane and counselled man to be likewise. "I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another: that tender organizations can be so serenely squashed out of existence like pulp,--tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortoises and toads run over in the road; and that sometimes it has rained flesh and blood! . . . Compassion is a very untenable ground." Was Thoreau really as hard-hearted as this?

Thus be maneuvering, by insisting that nature is kind and tender, now admitting and glorying in her serene ruthlessness, Thoreau was able to sustain his unshaken faith in nature's fundamental benevolence. Why did he and why could he take so extreme a position? I offer four reasons for your criticism and amendment. But before doing so, I should like to touch on something that you may be thinking.

There were, as everyone knows who knows Thoreau, two hemispheres to his personality. In one he was the observer, the measurer, the recorder of facts; the surveyor, the lead-pencil expert, the handyman, the hardheaded Yankee. In the other he was poet, mystic, Transcendentalist, and student of oriental scriptures. Thoreau himself, of course, was aware of this duality and regretted that in the latter part of his life the man of facts tended to displace the poet. You may be thinking that it was the mystic and Transcendentalist in Thoreau that led to his cosmic optimism. All I want to say at this point is that he could have been a mystic without the cosmic optimism. He could have loved nature passionately and yet not have represented her as a paragon of virtue. He might have admitted that from the point of view of individual human lives nature is sometimes benevolent and sometimes just the opposite. He might have conceded that the very word "nature" is only a convenient abstract and collective name for the total tangible universe and its laws or modes of operation; and that being such it has no personality and no definable attitude toward the human race. Conceivably Thoreau could have held that only God is all-benevolent, all-loving.

But he didn't. And so I should like to explore with you four reasons that may account for his position.

I

My first reason is an obvious one. Here in Concord nature is, or seems to be, predominantly benevolent. Indeed, you could search the earth and find no better model. No earthquakes. No volcanic eruptions. No tidal waves. No pythons, boa constrictors, crocodiles, sharks, scorpions, or venomous snakes. Concord, to be sure, has her hostile bacteria and viruses but they are invisible to the naked eye. She has her ants, but they are not the man-eating kind. In his brilliant description of a battle between red ants and black Thoreau could be wholly the detached and amused observer. By describing the battle as if it were a miniature version of human warfare, the satire has a double edge. On the one hand the tininess of the warriors makes the battle look ridiculous; on the other hand their more-than-human ferocity makes it harrowing to watch. What Thoreau does not suggest, the tragic interpretation he does not give us, is that man, a relatively recent product of nature has in a sense inherited his irrational and self-destructive warring from one of nature's far older products: the ant. It was here in peaceful Concord that Thoreau's basic attitude toward nature began to be formed. Later when he encountered the Maine forest and Mt. Katahdin and the devouring ocean off Cape Cod, he managed to reconcile these grimmer aspects of nature with the Currier-and-Ives scenes of his boyhood.

II

The second reason I suggest may surprise you. That no one was ever more scornful of the Bitch Goddess, Success, than Thoreau no one here needs to be told. And yet, in his own way, on his own ethical and idealistic terms, no one was ever more determined to be successful in the eyes of eternity. And to be successful on that lofty plane meant for Thoreau to be part of a universe that was itself ethically pure and benign. If the universe, that is, nature, corresponded to man's highest values and ideals, then the life of a noble individual would count, would be significant, and not go to waste.

This, of course, is the way a more theistically oriented person regards God. Since God is held to be the origin and sustainer of all ethical values, every human soul that is obedient to the divine will is assured that his individual life will find its immortal place in the divine order.

But note this significant difference between faith in an all-benevolent God and faith in an all-benevolent nature. God is intangible and inscrutable, and so cannot be pinned down. In the face of all the agonies that human beings suffer and have suffered over the ages, it is always possible to maintain that either God is not responsible, or that, though responsible, he has ultimately benevolent purposes, however inscrutable they may be to us. To a subtle theological mind the ways of God to man can always be justified. Not only can God always be exonerated, he can himself be held to originate what would seem to be monstrous evils (as in the Calvinistic dogma of Predestination) and still be accounted the essence of love. In St. Mary's churchyard in Limerick, Ireland, is a tombstone with this inscription: "God is love--Reader, flee from the wrath to come."

In other words, all sorts of theological sleight-of-hand can be performed on an intangible, in-

scrutable, and unfathomable God. But you can't do that with nature. Nature we know at first hand. Nature we see and touch and measure and more and more are able to predict. And the more the natural sciences explore and probe, the more obedient nature is found to be to her own laws and sequences. I am aware that much has been made of the principle of indeterminacy in atomic physics. But does the fact that atoms sometimes behave in unpredictable ways have any ethical significance? When a living person is caught and devoured by a column of man-eating ants, no one, not even Thoreau, will say that nature, or the ants which are a part of nature, are acting for that person's highest good.

All the more wonder, then, that Thoreau could maintain his extreme position. He said he rejoiced that nature was so rife with life that she could afford to let tortoises and toads be run over in the road. What would he say today about people being run over in the road? The principle is that same. People in carriages used to run over tortoises and toads; people in automobiles now run over other people. There were always plenty of tortoises and toads left. And there are still always plenty of people around.

III

"Compassion is a very untenable ground," wrote Thoreau. But there is evidence that Thoreau was himself a compassionate man. He was saying, I take it, that compassion is not appropriate since nature is either kind and tender or serenely and blissfully destructive. If he had admitted that nature's serenity in destruction is an inhuman serenity, am I right in thinking that he would have found the universe too painful a place to live in?

Listen. "When the thermometer is down to 20 in the morning as last month, I think of the poor dogs who have no masters."

"Some thoughtless and cruel sportsman has killed 22 young partridges not much bigger than robins, against the laws of Massachusetts and humanity."

IV

Thus far the reasons I have suggested for Thoreau's cosmic optimism have been somewhat speculative. But now I come to a reason that is explicit in Thoreau's own words. He believed -- so he said -- that the qualitative assessment of the universe should be based not on total evidence available to the human mind, but rather on human desires. I quote five passages from the Journal. "The truest account of heaven is the fairest and I will accept none which disappoints expectation. (III-232) "The brave man never hearest the din of war, he is trustful and unsuspecting, so observant of the least trait of good or beautiful that, if you turn toward him the dark side of anything, he will still see only the bright." (I-97, 1839) "I do not love to entertain doubts and questions." (II-46, 1850) "I fear only lest my expression may not be extravagant enough." (VI-100, 1854) "I do not think much of the actual. It is something which we have long since done with." (It is a sort of vomit in which the unclean love to wallow.) (II-44, 1850)

I find it hard to believe that Thoreau made these statements. The brave man never hears the din of war? He is trustful and unsuspecting? If so, the brave man is going to lose the battle before it begins. Thoreau does not think much of the actual? Thoreau who spent his life observing and recording the actualities of nature with such exquisite precision?

Perhaps you can tell me whether such a rosy philosophy was shared by any or many of Thoreau's

contemporaries. Was it part of that yeasty over-self-confidence known as Transcendentalism? How can such a philosophy be distinguished from wishful thinking? Wishful thinking on a high plane? Noble wishful thinking? Noble wishfulness without thinking!

Where does this leave Thoreau? It leaves him a great man, a man of multiple greatness. I suggest he is great on five counts, on five fronts. He was a Voice crying out, like an Old Testament prophet, for the preservation of wild nature and of all nature. A Voice crying out against commercialism and the worship of things, and for the simple life, which meant a life in which the means of living are reduced to a minimum so that the ends and essence of living may be enriched. He was a Voice crying out against slavery, black and every other kind, and for every kind of just freedom. And because he was not only a Voice but a doer, he was a hero. Fourthly, he was a great naturalist, and the fact that he did not specialize and so was not a professional made him, in my estimation, all the greater. Finally he was a great writer who wrote his greatest poems in prose.

Perhaps this is enough for one man - - - whether or not you agree with me that his philosophic and religious position should be taken with a grain of salt.

4-16-52

These drawings are reproduced from Thoreau's Journal. If you wish to identify them, simply look up the journal entry for the date indicated in the numerals.

THE 1977 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1977 annual meeting of the Thoreau Society was held in the First Parish Church in Concord, Mass. on Saturday July 9th. The meeting was called to order at 10:15 by the president, W. Stephen Thomas. The minutes of the 1976 meeting were accepted as printed in the Summer, 1976, BULLETIN. The following treasurer's report was read and accepted:

TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance on Hand as of June 4, 1976 \$3,487.54

Receipts

Dues	\$2,210.25	
Sale of back copies	163.80	
Life memberships	1,790.00	
Royalties	126.53	
Gifts	1,747.00	
Sale of luncheon tick.	442.00	
Sale of photographs	23.50	
Interest	185.90	
Mailing	100.00	
	<u>\$6,788.98</u>	<u>\$6,788.98</u>
		\$10,276.52

Expenses

Annual Meeting	
(including lunch)	\$1,029.64
Postage & Handling	975.26
Printing	762.21
Miscellaneous	75.22
Photography	50.00

Survey book	1,000.00	
Bernstein Collection	150.00	
Stationary	<u>174.59</u>	
	\$4,216.92	<u>\$4,216.92</u>
		\$6,059.60

BALANCE ON HAND AS OF JUNE 4, 1977 \$6,059.60

A gift of \$1500 to the society by Mr. August Black for the publication of a booklet presenting all known life portraits of Thoreau was announced. The secretary and Thomas Blanding have started research on this booklet. It was resolved that the Thoreau Society wishes to express its deep appreciation to Mr. Black for his generous gifts to the society which have permitted it to greatly enrich its publication program.

The society also expressed its appreciation to Mr. David Deane for his many years of service and generosity in providing public speaking and recording equipment for the annual meetings and he was presented with a copy of the new Princeton University Press ILLUSTRATED WALDEN.

Mary Gail ("Fuzzy") Fenn was also thanked for the wild flower arrangements which she provides each year for the meetings.

The gift to the Thoreau Society Archives by Mr. Earl Smith of Samuel Arthur Jones' annotated and autographed copy of the first edition of Ellery Channing's THOREAU THE POET NATURALIST was announced and the book was displayed.

The chairman of the nominating committee, Linda Beaulieu; announced the nomination of the following slate of officers for terms of one year: President, Paul Williams of Elsah, Illinois; President-elect, Wendell Glick of Duluth, Minn.; vice-president, Mrs. Charles MacPherson of Acton, Mass.; and secretary-treasurer, Walter Harding of Geneseo, New York; and for terms of three years on the executive committee, Thomas Blanding of Princeton, New Jersey and Betty Gatewood of New York City.

Robert Francis spoke on "Thoreau on the Benevolence of Nature" and W. Stephen Thomas gave the presidential address on "The Puzzle of Thoreau's Calendar of the Seasons."

After the usual luncheon, Roland Robbins conducted the quiz program. A special tour of F. B. Sanborn's former schoolhouse was arranged through the courtesy of the present owners Dr. and Mrs. Richard Conant and Robert Needham conducted a tour of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

A sherry party and box supper were served at the Thoreau Lyceum at 156 Belknap Street. The evening session consisted of a lecture, "The Savage Within: Thoreau and the American Indian" by Robert Sullivan and a showing of the Encyclopaedia Britannica film "Talking with Thoreau." The meeting ended with the presentation of the society's gavel to the incoming president, Paul Williams.

At the executive committee meeting on Friday afternoon it was decided to experiment with holding small mid-winter meetings in connection with the annual Modern Language Association meetings beginning in 1978. It was also agreed that it was the policy of the society not to accept advertising in its bulletin or other publications.

The annual meeting is described and photographed in great detail in the July 14, 1977 issue of the CONCORD PATRIOT. On Friday evening the Thoreau Lyceum sponsored a lecture by Michael Meyer, a portion of his new book, SEVERAL MORE LIVES TO LIVE. On Sunday morning, the First Parish Church sponsored a repeat of its "Henry David Thoreau Service of Worship."

We know that Thoreau was interested in the origin and meaning of the name of the pond he loved most. In "The Ponds" chapter of Walden he offers the theories that it was named after a legendary "old squaw, named Walden", and that "If the name was not derived from that of some English locality,--Saffron Walden, for instance,--one might suppose that it was called, originally, Walled-in Pond." In regards to the meaning of the word "Walden" I have found that in the Old English language there was a word wealdend, also spelled walden, which meant "lord, or ruler". Capitalized, Walden signified "the lord". (I take this information from the Glossary in Sweet's Anglo Saxon Reader). In light of this meaning of "Walden"--where the word is used in paraphrases for God--the lines "I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven/Than I live to Walden even", which are found in the poem included in the same "Ponds" chapter, would be literally true, "God" and "Walden" being synonymous in Old English. Although Thoreau was familiar with some Anglo-Saxon it is unlikely that he knew one meaning of "Walden" was "the Lord", for had he known he would certainly have capitalized on the fact. As it is, the coincidence of his juxtaposing "God" and "Walden" in these very pantheistic lines of poetry is almost uncanny. Had he known of it, this congruence of names--that "Walden" signified "God" in Old English--would certainly have delighted Thoreau.

5/15/53

ADDITIONS TO THE THOREAU BIBLIOGRAPHY . . WH

- Baytop, Adrienne. "Music Is the Sound of Universal Laws Promulgated." CEA CRITIC, 39 (March, 1977), 11-15. Use of sound in WALDEN.
- Beppu, Keiko. "Thoreau: An Exemplar of Individual Freedom." KOBE COLLEGE STUDIES (Japan), 21 (July, 1974), 1-14.
- Blanding, Thomas. "Beans, Baked and Half-Baked (3)" CONCORD SAUNDERER (CS), 12 (Spring, 1977), 18-22. Misc. notes on Thoreau.
- "Beans, Baked, and Half-Baked (4)" CS, 12 (Summer, 1977), 18-21. On early efforts to publish Thoreau's journal.
- "Calvin Greene Again." CS, 12 (Summer, 1977), 15.
- Bly, William. "Thoreau's Cabin (ground plan)" VOYEUR (New York Univ.), 3 (Jan. 1977), 6. A poem on Thoreau.
- Clarke, Mary Stetson. THE OLD MIDDLESEX CANAL Melrose, Mass.: Hilltop Press, 1974. 191pp. Includes material on Thoreau's traversing the canal in A WEEK.
- Clarkson, John W. Jr. "F. B. Sanborn, 1831-1917," CS, 12 (Summer, 1977), 1-8. An excellent brief life of Thoreau's biographer.
- Dedmond, Francis B. "Eliery Channing to Sophia Thoreau: An Unpublished Letter," CS, 12 (Summer 1977), 16-17.
- Ferguson, Laraine. "Wild Nectar: The Language of Thoreau's Poetry." CS, 12 (Spring, 1977), 1-7.
- Gleason, Herbert W. THOREAU COUNTRY. Review. UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST WORLD. April 15, 1977.
- Glick, Wendell. "Thoreau as Failed Poet." LAKE SUPERIOR JOURNAL (Duluth, Minn.), 2 (1976), 40-4 4.
- Johnson, Paul David. "Thoreau's Redemptive WEEK," AMERICAN LITERATURE, 49 (March, 1977), 22-33.
- Lebeaux, Richard. YOUNG MAN THOREAU. Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1977. 262pp. \$12.50. Based on Eriksonian psychology, this is the most important biographical study of Thoreau in many a year. Arguing that Thoreau had a prolonged adolescence and a troubled young adulthood that included strained relations with his father, mother, and brother, Lebeaux asserts that at Walden Thoreau finally found himself. Lebeaux does, I think, over-emphasize Thoreau's mother's domineering and father's failures, and I am not convinced that Thoreau's relations with his brother John were as openly hostile as Lebeaux suggests. But my disagreements with Lebeaux here are chiefly only a matter of degree, not of facts. His discussion of the development of Thoreau's creativity is the most thought-provoking and rewarding I have yet seen. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who wants better to understand what made Henry Thoreau the man he was and I hope that since Lebeaux here covers only the early years of Thoreau's life, he will now go on and write a sequel to cover the later years.
- Logan, Todd. "Concord Gripes." WRITER'S DIGEST, 57 (May, 1977), 4-5. A satire on WALDEN about the difficulties of a free lance writer today.
- Lorberg, Aileen. "Henry David Thoreau." JACK & JILL. June, 1977. pp. 54-55. A brief cartoon life of Thoreau for children.
- Malamud, Bernard. "Dubin's Lives," NEW YORKER. April 18, 1977, pp. 38ff; April 25, 1977, pp. 36 ff. A short story about a biographer of Thoreau.
- McGrath, Anne Root. "As Long as It Is in Concord," CS, 12 (Summer, 1977), 9-11. An 1854 letter of James Spooner telling of visiting Thoreau.
- McNamara, Susan. "To Walden, and Beyond--They're on Thoreau's Trail." ROCHESTER (N.Y.) DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE. July 14, 1977. Account of 1977 Thoreau Society annual meeting.
- Meyer, Michael. SEVERAL MORE LIVES TO LIVE: THOREAU'S POLITICAL REPUTATION IN AMERICA. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977. 216pp. This is for me at least the most exciting new book on Thoreau's ideas to appear in the '70's. It is a survey of the response during the half century from 1920 to 1970 to Thoreau's social and political thought. That may sound like just another one of those deadly doctoral dissertations that is deservedly gathering dust, unpublished, on the back shelves of some university library, but let me assure you that this is something very different. True enough it originated as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Connecticut, but there is nothing dry-as-dust about this volume. It is a thoughtful, provocative, and witty survey and analysis of how the critics have approached Thoreau's political and social ideas --and it reveals as much about them as it does about Thoreau's ideas--which is saying a great deal. Just how much attitudes towards Thoreau have changed over the half century is as amazing as is how patterned the approach has been in each decade. I have emerged with a whole new understanding of some of the major critics of the past half century. Parrington and Matthiessen emerge as the heroes of the book and Foerster as one of the "villains." Many academic critics come in for some well-deserved rebukes. Meyer has some particularly caustic remarks about those critics who think Thoreau's style to be more important than his ideas.

Moosehead Bicentennial Committee. A GUIDE OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU'S 1857 TRIP ON MOOSEHEAD LAKE. N.p., (1976). 6pp.

Neufeldt, Leonard N. "The Making of Alek Therien: Journal Antecedents of Therien as Literary Character." CS, 12 (Summer, 1977), 12-14. An astonishing revelation that part of the description of the French Canadian woodchopper is based on a young man Thoreau met in the Maine Woods.

Orloski, Richard J. "Civil Disobedience." LIBERTY, 72 (March, 1977), 1-3.

Perfection Form Co. "Henry David Thoreau: An Instant Biogram." Logan, Iowa, 1971. A 2-page student's crib sheet on Thoreau.

Sakamoto, Masayuki. NON-GOVERNING GOVERNMENT: A BIOGRAPHY OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU. Tokyo: Kokudo, 1975. 254pp. Text in Japanese. A biography for young people. Includes a translation of "Civil Disobedience."

----- The Same. Review. (Koh Kasegawa). EIGO SEINEN (Jan. 1976), p. 483.

Sarkesian, Barbara. "Thoreau and Cats: A Special Fascination." CS, 12 (Spring, 1977), 8-10.

Seaburg, Alan. "The Fox of Walden." SPIRIT, 43 (Fall, 1976), 22. Poem.

Simon, Gary. "Walden's Sublime Primitivist or, Ms French's Infamous Bull-Frog Story." CS, 12 (Spring, 1977), 12-16.

Thompson, Rick. "It's a soothing afternoon." DIFFERENT DRUMMER 2 (1976), 3. Poem.

Thoreau, Henry David, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. Logan, Iowa: Perfection Form, 1971. 40pp.

----- LE DESOBEISSANCE CIVILE; PLAKDOYER POUR JOHN BROWN. Trans. by M. Flak & L. Vernet. Montreal: La Presse, 1973. 163pp.

----- LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE. Logan, Iowa: Perfection Form, 1968. 34pp.

----- "A Message for Our Time." BUFFALO COURIER-EXPRESS. March 13, 1977. Quotations from Thoreau illustrated with photographs.

----- REFLECTIONS AT WALDEN. Edited by Peter Seymour & James Morgan. Kansas City: Hallmark, 1971. 61pp.

----- SELECTED WORKS OF THOREAU. Trans. into Japanese by Haruko Kimura, Taro Shinada, & H. Saito. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1977. Includes "Concord River," "Spring," "Wild Apples," "The Shipwreck," "Provincetown," "Love," "Walking," "Life without Principle," "Civil Disobedience," "Slavery in Mass.," "Plea for John Brown," poems and journal selections.

----- WALDEN. Recorded on 7 1½-hour tapes by Dan Lazar. Los Angeles: Books on Tape (PO Box 71405, L.A. 90071), 1977. To be listened to while driving along the freeways. A very clear recording. Not for sale; to be rented at \$7.50.

----- WALKING. Annotated in Japanese by Koh Kasegawa. Tokyo: Aikusha, 1977. 90pp.

Tuerk, Richard. Review. AMERICAN LITERATURE, 49 (March, 1977), 126-7.

Van Anglen, K.P. "A Note on Thoreau and Aeschylus." CS, 12 (Spring, 1977), 11.

Vincent, Howard. THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL: A STUDY GUIDE. Kent, Ohio: Kent Acting & Touring Co., 1977. 8pp. For the play.

Watson, Robert A. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS. (Concord: Trinitarian Church, 1977? 10pp.) Includes material on the Thoreau's involvement in founding the church.

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We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: G. Baker, J. Brewer, A. Butler, M. Campbell, R. Chapman, W. Cummings, J. Donovan, R. Epler, E. Fergenson, F. Black, V. Friesen, R. Ganley, W. Glick, H. Gottschalk, J. Graywood, G. Hannon, G. Hasenauer, R. Haynes, W. Herr, W. Howarth, R. Hull, E. Johnson, R. Jones, K. Kasegawa, D. Kamen-Kaye, G. Kerfoot, L. Kleinfeld, A. Kovar, W. Krieger, R. Levenson, W. McInnes, M. Meyer, C. Moseley, M. Moss, R. Needham, C. Orr, R. Poland, M. Quiros-Lugo, R. Schaedle, A. Seaburg, E. Teale, R. Thompson, J. Vickers, H. Vincent, S. Waring, E. Williams and P. Williams. Please keep your secretary informed of items he has missed and new ones as they appear.

2/5/53

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CONCORD . . .

Walden Pond was closed to swimming for three hours on July 15, not as rumor had it because of seepage from sewage facilities, but because the pumps providing fresh water for the bathhouses broke down.

Concord police have notified Walden Pond State park officials that car parking at the pond has gotten so much out of hand that they can no longer attempt to control it.

The pollution control of the Merrimack River watershed has been so successful that young salmon are being seeded there in hopes that they will return.

The Jogabouts from the Hanscom Air Force Base in nearby Bedford sponsored their second annual Thoreau Birthday Jog from his birthplace on Virginia Road to the cabin site at Walden Pond on July 10, 1977.

The bronze plaque marking the site of Thoreau's incarceration in the Concord jail was recently stolen, but it has been recovered by the Concord police and is being stored in the present Concord jail pending restoration to the scene.

1/26/53

INFORMATION PLEASE . . .

The editorial staff of the new Princeton edition of the Writings of Henry D. Thoreau would be grateful for any help in identifying the following references in Thoreau's manuscript journal. Please send any identifications directly to The Thoreau Edition, Firestone Library, B-10-J, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08540.

17 August 1840: When Robert, afterwards Lord, Clive, with one hundred and twenty Europeans, and two hundred Sepoys, was invested in the fort of Arcot by ten thousand native and French soldiers, and, after a siege of fifty days, began to feel the pressure of hunger, "The Sepoys came to Clive, not to complain of their scanty fare, but to propose that all the grain should be given to the Europeans, who required more nourishment than the natives of Asia. The thin gruel, they said, which was strained away from the rice, would suffice for themselves." source of this quotation?

21 August 1840: The humane society will not make despicable so soon as the butcher nor the grouse shooter so soon as he who kills sparrows--I feel great respect for the English deer stalker on reading that "His muscles must be of marble, and his sinews of steel". He must not only 'run like

the antelope, and breathe like the trade wind;' but he must be able to 'run in a stooping position with a grey-hound pace, having his back parallel to the ground, and his face within an inch of it for miles together' He must have a taste for running, like and eel through sand, ventre a terre, and he should be accomplished in skilfully squeezing his clothes after this operation, to make all comfortable."

source of this quotation?

5 November 1840: Truth is as vivacious and will spread it self as fast as the fungi, which you can by no means annihilate with your heel, for their sporules are soinfinitely numerous and subtle as to resemble "thin smoke; so light that they may be raised into the atmosphere, and dispersed in so many ways by the attraction of the sun, by insects, wind, elasticity, adhesion, &c., that it is difficult to conceive a place from which they may be excluded."

source of this quotation?

11 December 1840: A man who failed to fulfill an engagement to me, and grossly disappointed me, came to me tonight with a countenance radiant with repentance.

who is this man?

Volume IV

31 January 1841: At each step man measures himself against the system. If he can not actually belay the sun, and make it fast to this planet, yet the British man alone spins a yarn in one year, which will reach fifty one times the distance from the earth to the sun.

from what source did HDT come to this knowledge of the British man and his yarn?

2 February 1841: When I read the other day the weight of some of the generals of the Revolution, it seemed no unimportant fact in their biography. What was HDT reading that would have given him this information?

3 February 1841: As the ancient Britons were exhibited in Rome in their native costume--and the Dacian came to display his swordsmanship in the arena--so the Tyrolese peasants have come farther yet--even from the neighborhood of Rome--to Concord--for our entertainment this night. The information about the Tyrolese peasants has been tracked down; HDT perhaps read Tacitus' Annals XII, 36 for knowledge of the Britons; but who is the Dacian, and what is HDT's source?

4 February 1841: Ye came one day too late--as did the poet after the world had been divided, and so returned to dwell with the God that sent him. To what is HDT alluding here?

19 February 1841: Coleridge observed the "landscapes made by damp on a white-washed wall" and so have I.

In what printed source is Coleridge's white-washed-wall-watching recorded?

Volume 6

28 March 1842: Some books ripple on like a stream and we feel that the author is in the full tide of discourse. . . They read as if written for military men--or men of business--there is such a dispatch in them.-- and a double-quick time a Saratoga march--with beat of drum.

a Saratoga march is clearly a musical composition: composer? date?

30 March 1842: The sap of all noble schemes drieth up--and the schemers return again and again in despair to "common sense and labor."
source for the quoted phrase?

3 April 1842: Experience is in the head and fingers. The heart is inexperienced. Sorrow singeth the sweetest strain--The Daughters of Zion--The last Sigh of the Moor--Joy is the nectar of flowers --sorrow the honey of bees.
Any information about the composers and dates of these songs? "Daughter of Zion" sounds like a religious piece; the same can't be said for the signing Moor.

Volume 8

undated: Some Ceres or minerva reigns--showering the silvery grain on all the fields and in every nook. . . Perhaps it will be so--that nature will say you shall snow over hamlet or wood--now plat-tering the roofs now dallying with the twigs of the alder and willow by the river side.--You shall rain--and you shall blow. &c.
the &c. at the end suggests that HDT is quoting part of a longer passage, perhaps of verse? What is the passage?

Volume 9

13 October 43: What an impulse was given some time or other to the principle of vegetation that now nothing can stay it. I understand why one said he thought he could write an epic to be called the leaf.

The authorities tell me that the epic writer is Emerson, but no one seems to know when and if RWE made a notation of this plan.

20 November 1843: The grandeur of the similes is another feature which characterizes great poetry. . . They are not slight and transient like the stains on a white-washed wall.
the unidentified Coleridge passage in vol. 4 seems to be on HDT's mind again.

21 November 1843: I have heard a painter who complained of the difficulty of representing the reflection in still water truly, advised to make ripples where he did not want reflections! should we take "heard" at face value, and assume that this anecdote came to HDT through conversation? or should we assume there is a printed source? If the latter, what might that source be?



1/26/53

NOTES UPON WALDEN by Edward Craney Jacobs

Walter Harding's The Variorum Walden (Washington Square Press, 1963) provides an accurate text and a wealth of textual commentary upon Walden. Harding's "notes" reveal the resources of Thoreau's mind and enable us to observe Thoreau at work, as it were, behing the scenes, shaping his diverse experiences and knowledge into artistic wholeness. To Harding's notes I wish to add several that are relevant to a study of Walden. References below are to page and line numbers of The Variorum Walden. Biblical citations are from the King James translation.

p. 54, l.7: "Making darkness visible"; Cf. 63: "No light, but rather darkness visible." "The Bean-Field"

p. 120, ll.15-16: "like a mote in the eye"; Cf. Matthew 7.3: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye."

p. 126, ll.5-6: "and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also." Cf.

the familiar Old Testament law requiring a man to sacrifice to God the first fruits of his crop. E. g. Exodus 22.29: "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits."

"The Village"

p. 130, ll. 16-18: "Not till we are lost . . . not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves." Cf. Matthew 10.39: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."



1/26/53

A FOOTNOTE TO MARCIA MOSS'S A CATALOG OF THOREAU'S SURVEYS by Francis Dedmond

All Thoreauvians are grateful to Marcia Moss for her A Catalog of Thoreau's Surveys in the Concord Free Public Library (T.S. Booklet 28). This note deals with or draws from different sources some miscellaneous information Mrs. Moss chose not to use concerning Henry D. Thoreau, Surveyor. For instance, Thoreau, during his lifetime, was mentioned only nine times in the annual Reports of the Selectmen of Concord. Eight of those referred to surveying or bridge inspecting Thoreau had done for the town of Concord:

- 1850/51. p. 26. H.D. Thoreau's bill for surveying West Burying Ground. \$1.00
- 1851/52. p. 18. H.D. Thoreau for plan of town way laid out near the house of James P. Brown. \$4.00
- p. 18. H.D. Thoreau for perambulating town lines and erecting stones at Action and Bedford lines. \$18.00
- p. 18. H.D. Thoreau for surveying and plan of line between Concord and Carlisle. \$42.00
- 1852/53. p. 28. Henry D. Thoreau, surveying lot. \$4.00
- 1859/60. p. 9. Repair of Bedford road. Paid H.D. Thoreau, surveying, etc. \$10.00
- 1860/61. p. 10. H.D. Thoreau, surveying on turnpike. \$1.00
- 1861/62. p. 11. H.D. Thoreau, inspecting stone bridge. \$3.00

Over a period of a dozen years, Thoreau was paid \$83.00 for services rendered the town, all except \$3.00 for surveying.

On October 1, 1873, at the dedication of the new building of the Concord Free Public Library, Emerson, hoping Thoreau's local reputation would undergo a change said:

Henry Thoreau we all remember as a man of genius, and of marked character, known to our farmers as the most skillful of surveyors, and indeed better acquainted with their forests and meadows and trees than themselves, but more widely known as the writer of some of the best books which have been written in this country, and which, I am persuaded, have not yet gathered half their fame. (Dedication of the New Building for the Free Public Library of Concord, Massachusetts, Wednesday, October 1, 1873 (Boston: Toman & White, 1873), p. 40.)

The Report of the Selectmen for 1874/75 declared that Miss Sophia E. Thoreau has deposited in the iron safe of the library building the unpublished manuscripts of her brother Henry D. Thoreau. They

fill three trunks or boxes. One contains a complete survey of almost every farm in town, which will be of great value in the future in regard to the boundary lines of different estates, especially so when we consider the established accuracy of Mr. Thoreau's surveys and measurements. The other boxes contain between forty and fifty closely written books of memoranda of the natural history of Concord and of the Indians who made this locality their home and hunting ground. These treasures do not really belong to the library, but are placed under the trusteeship of Mr. R.W. Emerson, and very appropriately deposited in the said iron safe for security. p. 42)"

In the 1876/77 Report of the Selectmen, it was Emerson himself who signed the report of the Library Committee. Emerson wrote:

The Library Committee state that by the death of Sophia E. Thoreau, they have been informed by her executor that she has directed in her will that the boxes of manuscripts of her late brother, Henry D. Thoreau, hitherto deposited in the closet of the Public Library, shall be delivered to Harrison Gray Otis Blake of Worcester, and they have been sent to him. The third box which contains Mr. Thoreau's surveys of lands in Concord and the neighborhood, she bequeaths to the Concord Library. (p. 34)

These are the surveys Mrs. Moss reproduces in her A Catalog.

Thoreau might have been known by his neighbors during his lifetime as the man who set the woods on fire, but after his death, it is safe to say, he was remembered by the town officials, by his neighbors, and by the farmers roundabout as the man who walked the town lines, surveyed the turnpikes, and laid off the woodlots.



1/24/53

THE THOREAU COLLECTION OF ERNEST W. VICKERS by Fritz Oehlschlaeger

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library has recently acquired the Thoreauvian correspondence of Ernest W. Vickers, pioneer Thoreau student and disciple from Ellsworth Station, Ohio. Ernest Vickers was one of the small band of early Thoreauvians who did so much to promote Thoreau's reputation in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. The collection includes letters from many of Vickers' co-workers in early Thoreau studies--Henry S. Salt, Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones, Franklin B. Sanborn, Edwin B. Hill, Edward W. Emerson, and Walton Ricketson. An important resource for students of Thoreau, the Vickers collection supplements the Collection of Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones, acquired by the University of Illinois Library in 1975.

Among the items in the Vickers collection are several of Mr. Vickers' own letters which explain the source of his interest in Thoreau. Vickers was himself a curiously Thoreauvian man; a student of birds and plants, a daily walker, the keeper of a journal of his thoughts and observations. He was, like Thoreau, from an abolitionist background and was deeply proud of his family's involvement in the anti-slavery cause. In a letter to Walton Ricketson of January 29, 1906, he commented on his abolitionist inheritance, which was similar to Ricketson's as well as to Thoreau's:

I find we have even more in common than this mutual love of Thoreau.--a quaker ancestry. For this I am thankful. I was born in Salem, Col. Co. Ohio (in 1869) and am proud of that little town. It took deep interest in the antislavery cause, and its old town hall is sacred to all the speakers in that cause.--Phillips, Garrison, F. Douglass, Alby Kelley, &c. There were 3 quaker churches. The Antislavery Bugle was published there. Copies of which have long belonged to the family are among my valued possessions. My grandfather was one of its agents held anti-slavery meetings in his barn, while his father had a windowless house where escaping slaves put up as they passed there on 'the underground rail-road.'

In another letter, to F. B. Sanborn of January 19, 1906, Vickers described himself as "one of the host that is indebted to Henry D. Thoreau"; he then elaborated upon the influence of Walden on his own life: "I read 'Walden' at that period when any truly great book may become a powerful moulding influence. It looms up in my past like some mountain of transfiguration. Born with a strong hereditary love of nature and the study of natural history I was peculiarly fitted to be moulded by the attitude of Thoreau." Vickers then announced to Sanborn his intention of "gathering into my library everything in periodical and book form that is written pertaining to Thoreau."

Vickers was aided in the making of his Thoreau collection by E. B. Hill, Dr. Jones, Ricketson, Salt, and Sanborn, all of whom sent items of Thoreauvian interest. From these same correspondents Vickers sought information concerning the issues of Thoreau scholarship which intrigued him: the histories of the various Thoreau portraits, the characters of the Thoreau parents, the reliability of Sanborn as biographer of Thoreau. The fruits of Vickers' inquiries in these directions are included in the correspondence of the Vickers collection, a brief check-list of which I include below: 1 letter from Edward W. Emerson to Ernest W. Vickers and a copy of one letter from Edward W. Emerson to Walton Ricketson; 13 letters from Edwin B. Hill to Ernest W. Vickers; 1 letter from Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones to Ernest W. Vickers; 7 letters and cards from Walton Ricketson to Ernest W. Vickers; 20 letters of Henry S. Salt to Ernest W. Vickers; 5 letters and cards of F. B. Sanborn to Ernest W. Vickers, one copy of a letter from Sanborn to E. B. Hill, and a copy of one letter from Sanborn to Henry Salt; 1 letter of George Tolman to Ernest W. Vickers; 6 letters or extracts of letters by Ernest W. Vickers, to Jones, Ricketson, and Sanborn.

Also in Mr. Vickers' collection was Thoreau's letter to Daniel Ricketson of May 16, 1857. This letter, given to Vickers by Walton Ricketson, has not been acquired by the University of Illinois Library; it is now owned by Mr. John E. Holzbach of Youngstown, Ohio. The Thoreau letter was published in The Concord Saunterer, 8, No. 2 (June 1973), pp. 4-6. (University of Illinois.)



7/24/53

NOTES AND QUERIES. . .

The following have recently become life members of the Thoreau Society: E. Johnson, M. Davey, L. Files, E. Biewald, R. Patrick, E. Smith, J. Butkis, C. Lang, C. Heinle, R. Myers, W. Gallagher, W. Walters, H. Garand, W. McInnes, W. Kreiger, K. Sanderson, J. Davin, G. Hannon, A. Connell, G.

Godfrey, F. Flack, H. Hooper, L. Reep, S. Smith, M. King, R. Thompson, H. Bruner, J. Sankey, O. Yoshida, F. Wagner, L. Fergenson, C. Gay, G. Baker, R. Robbins. Life membership in the society is now one hundred dollars.

Added to the 5" x 7" glossy prints available from the society for 50¢ is this print of the title page of the first edition of WALDEN showing Sophia Thoreau's drawing of her brother's cabin:

WALDEN;

OR,

LIFE IN THE WOODS.

BY HENRY D. THOREAU,

AUTHOR OF "A WALK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS."



I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up. -- Page 92.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
M DCCC LIV.

The NEW YORK TIMES for March 25, 1977, cites Morarji Ranchhodji Desai, the new Prime Minister of India, as being a warm admirer of Thoreau and speaking of him as "perhaps . . . even greater than Gandhi."

The KEENE (N.H.) SENTINEL for April 16, 1977 includes a lengthy tribute to society member Elliot Allison emphasizing Thoreau's influence on his life.

The Board of Trustees for the State Colleges of Connecticut has recently approved a \$34,218 grant to Eastern Connecticut State College for the Development of a Henry David Thoreau School of Wilderness Studies under the direction of J. Parker Huber. The State University College at Geneseo, New York, is making plans for a two-day conference next spring on "Psychology and the Literary Artist: A Case Study of Henry David Thoreau." Scholars wishing to present papers on a psychological approach to Thoreau's life and or works should get in touch with Walter Harding immediately. Particularly wanted is a study of Thoreau's recorded dreams.